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SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/RUS, OES/STC, EB/TPP/ATP, EB/TPP/BTA
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USAID FOR BLANCHET, TROSTLE AND CARROLL
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FAS PASS FSIS AND APHIS
VIENNA PASS APHIS
BRUSSELS PASS APHIS/FERNANDEZ
GENEVA PASS HEALTH ATTACHE

E.O.12958:N/A

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [KPAO](#) [TBIO](#) [AMED](#) [TU](#) [CASC](#) [EAID](#) [SENV](#) [ECON](#)

SUBJECT: Avian Influenza Situation in Turkey - No Human Cases

Refs: (A) Ankara 5119 (B) Ankara 6105 (C) Ankara 6138

(D) Ankara 6232 (E) Ankara 6291 (F) Ankara 6430
(G) Ankara 6514 (H) Ankara 6605 (I) Ankara 7034
(J) Ankara 7318 (K) Ankara 7606

1. Summary. On December 31, 2005, and January 1, 2006, a total of seven people, five of which were children, from the Eastern part of Turkey were hospitalized with bird flu-like symptoms. One child died late in the evening of January 1, 2006. On January 2, test results showed that the child did not die from bird flu or any influenza virus. In addition, bird flu was ruled out as the cause of the illness of the rest of the patients admitted with bird flu-like symptoms. Therefore, there are no cases of humans with Avian Influenza in Turkey. The Ministries of Health and Agriculture are working together and are taking all necessary steps on this issue. End summary.

No Human Bird Flu Case in Turkey

2. A total of seven people from the Eastern part of Turkey were hospitalized with bird flu-like symptoms over the New Year's weekend. All of them were from the town of Dogubeyazit in Agri. Six of them were taken to a hospital in Van and the other one to a hospital in Erzurum. The patients who were hospitalized in Van said that they had killed and eaten one of their sick chickens. A 14-year old boy, one of the children in the Van hospital, died late in the evening on January 1, 2006. Results from various tests conducted by the hospital and by the Ministry of Health showed that he did not die of avian influenza (AI) or any other influenza virus. Tests also indicated that all of the other patients admitted with similar symptoms did not have AI. It was determined that he and the other patients in the hospital in Van suffered from pneumonia. The patient in Erzurum, it was discovered, has hepatitis.

3. In a meeting on January 2, Health Ministry Deputy Director General Fehmi Aydinli stated that there were no human cases of AI in Turkey. He reported that tests were conclusive that the boy who died in the Van hospital did not/not die of AI (rapid, Eliza, and PCR tests were performed at the Refik Saydam Hifzisiha Laboratory in Ankara). Aydinli said that the Ministry is awaiting other culture test results to determine the cause of death (and the cause of hospitalization in Van of the boy's three siblings).

4. Health Ministry reps sent multiple teams to Eastern Turkey to coordinate with MAGR officials and to work on public education (do not eat sick poultry). The Health Ministry worked closely with the Hospital in Van to expedite testing and made regular press statements to provide timely and important information.

Government Response to Suspicious cases in the East

5. Samples from the AI (H5) infected poultry in the city of Aralik, in the province of Igdir were not sent to the laboratory in London as was previously reported due to the holidays and to ensure safe handling of the samples. The Ministry of Agriculture plans to send the samples for further testing of the N subtype this week. Results are expected within a week. The GOT imposed a strict 10 km. quarantine zone around the city of Aralik, in Igdir. About 700 birds were killed in the first 3 kilometers and entry and exit of poultry and trucks is forbidden. The next 7 kilometers are under surveillance.

16. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, poultry also died in Horasan, in the province of Erzurum, and are being tested for AI. The Ministry of Agriculture took samples from sick and dead poultry from Erzurum and Agri and sent them to the laboratory in Izmir for AI testing. Lab results are pending.

17. Surveillance and precautionary animal and human quarantine measures are also on-going in Erzurum and in a 3 km. radius around Dogubeyazit in Agri. The provincial directorates are actively monitoring the situation.

Comments

18. Turkey had two widely spaced (chronologically and geographically) AI outbreaks, allowing it to systematically increase its readiness and test its action plans and coordination. The importance of being able to implement quick and accurate communication to the public and farmers has been made clear, and the GOT has so far done a reasonable job. Turkey's two main migratory bird fly-ways (in the west and east) have now each generated an AI outbreak. Turkey's resources and inter-agency coordination would be tested in the event of multiple outbreaks, so it still needs international coordination and assistance to gin up its preparedness for the return of migrating birds in the spring.

19. The Turkish Poultry Association (BESD-BIR) and other industry contacts stated that many birds in the country typically die during this season due to the harsh weather conditions. Moreover, they pointed out that poor people in rural areas, such as the ones in the Eastern part of Turkey who have poultry in their backyards, might be claiming that their birds have AI just to get compensation from the government. Since they are uneducated, they do not realize that the GOT is only compensating farmers whose animals were killed by the government for precautionary purposes, not farmers whose animals died on their own. They also noted that other villagers initially hesitated to claim their animals to the government but, through quick dissemination of accurate information, the GOT was able to convince them to hand over all of their poultry.

Embassy Action

10. The Embassy Avian Influenza Working group convened recently and will meet again on Wednesday, January 4, 2006, to discuss next steps. At this time, it seems that the GOT has the current situation under control and is increasing its surveillance to detect future suspicious bird deaths in the region.

WILSON